Belfountain Walking Tour

prepared by THE PEEL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Belfountain History

The village of Belfountain lies in the heart of the Credit River Valley in the Caledon Hills area, 35 miles northwest of Toronto.

The village name evolved today from its original spelling, as shown on the Tremaine Map of 1859. The 1859 spelling Bellefountaine was changed to Belfountain.

The first settler to the area was United Empire Loyalist William Frank. In 1825 he built a house, dam and grist mill on River Road or Mill Street which eventually passed into the hands of the McCurdy family. They built an additional mill, and then rented the entire operation to a "Mr. Bull". The McCurdy property was Lot 9, plan of Belfountain next to the present Community Hall.

The Blairs, McLeods and Bakers were the earliest of the Belfountain pioneers, arriving in the early 1800s. McLeod was listed as a general merchant and boot/shoemaker. Other earlier settlers include John Creighton, Mr. Hugh McLaren, William and Mary Eagle who arrived in the early 1820s, and the Franks (1827) and the Smiths (1843).

Charles Byam operated a general store and post office, James Steele had a tanning business, James Graham owned a store and William McDonald ran a blacksmith shop by 1877.

Two lumber mills were in operation by this time as well. One was on Credit St., the other near the falls on McDonalds St.

Other businesses included Thomas Bush's Wagon Shop, Mr. Roszell's tavern and Robert Brock's cabinet-making, undertaking and Justice of the Peace services.

Both the Baptist Church and Methodist Church served the townfolk by 1877.

In 1879 the Credit Valley Railway reached Belfountain. The Forks of the Credit station served the area; Belfountain was not thought of as a favourable site due to its rough landscape.

Belfountain was once the centre of commerce for surrounding towns at the time when quarries sprang up in the Credit Forks area. Belfountain had mills for grain and lumber, stores and provided housing for quarry management. Unfortunately, the importance of Belfountain decreased in unision with the diminishment of the quarries success.

In the early 1800s Mr. and Mrs. Peter McTaggart Sr. owned a general store. The store was later purchased by Mrs. Florence Hudson and her sister Miss Annie Riley who converted it into "The Wayside Inn".

Mr. Roszell operated a store at Bush and Main Streets which later was owned by John Bush who used it as a hotel. This is the site of Belfountain's first post office; Thomas Bush was postmaster until 1860, Noah Herring from 1860 to 1890, and Charles Byam until 1903.

In 1904 the Women's Institute and "the Grange" Institute were established. The Community Hall was erected in 1931.

In the mid 1800s a log cabin school stood at Bush St. and the 5th Concession West , one half mile east of the village. The school was replaced by a brick building which operated until 1963.

Renewed interest in the area came when men like C. W. Mack looked to Belfountain as a summer residential area. Mack's property has since been sold to the Credit Valley Conservation Authority. His house has been torn down but the park has remained open to the public.

Walking Tour

Park at Belfountain General Store and proceed to site number one.

1. Site of SS#6 Caledon Belfountain, first school built in the early 1800s. Another school-house of brick was built on the same lot in 1864. In 1876 a front extension made to the building became the senior student area. This building burnt down in 1978.
2. Site of original Baptist Church, 1859. Only the garage remains of the original foundation.
3. Early Home. This 2½ storey home has gingerbreading and quoining above the windows. It is now owned by the Lawrs and was built by William Bush in the 1800s.
4. Early Home, built by Sir Thomas Bush before 1824. Now a nursery and private home.
5. General Store/J. E. Byam's Store, 1876 (Antique Shop). The front part of this building was the store while the back portion was his home. His son Charles ran the post office from 1890 to 1903. The property was later sold to James Herring. The basement was a jail, and the original cells still remain.
6. Gingerbread Cottage (formerly an antique and gift shop), built c. 1850. Home of John Drury, the local school teacher for many years. The house was moved closer to Main St. and a number of additions have been made.
7. Site of Graham's General Store. This store was in competition with Belfountain's general store across the street. The store burnt down in 1909. At this time, Willis joined the store across the street as his store was never rebuilt.
8. Baptist Church (Village Church), 1889. Being the larger of the two village churches; the two amalgamated to form this church.
9. Site of Bush's Wagon Shop.
10. Wayside Inn and Barn, first operated as a general store in the 1850s by Peter and Barbara McTaggart. In the early 1900s it became a holiday getaway for city folk or wandering artists. When the rooms in the Inn were filled owners Mrs. Florence Hudson and her sister Miss Annie Kiley offered their customers the barn. This building was once Mary's Antiques and now is the post office.
11. Early Belfountain Home, built 1886 by Mr. Blackwood, a retired seaman. Note the "porthole" windows on the side of the house.
12. Community Hall, erected 1931.
13. Methodist Church, c. 1893 of brick with a strong stone foundation. In 1909 it was sold as a private residence. This was one of the two churches which amalgamated to form the Village Church.
14. Former Brock Store, owned by Robert Western Brock who was the village cabinet-maker. He conducted funerals, kept the store and acted as Justice of the Peace and Magistrate. The house is now residential.

15. Belfountain library stands on what used to be MacDonald's Street.

16. Henderson's Blacksmith Shop, c. 1855. In operation well into the 1890s. It was also a wagon paint shop. This property goes back to 1877 when owned by the McCurdy's. It later became the J. R. Trimble garage and general repairing shop. It is still a garage today. The blacksmith's tub was located here, the tub after which the town became known as Tubtown.

17. Tavern/Hotel/General Store (Belfountain General Store), north corner of Bush and Main Streets. This was once "Glover's Tavern" run by a Mr. Roszell. It is a roughcast frame building. A stable was once located across the street at Trimble's. Fire gutted the building and it was rebuilt as a hotel for John Bush and Hank Willis. Lachlan Willis operated a general store inside the hotel. Belfountain's post office was here at one time. Thomas J. Bush was first postmaster until 1860, second was Noah Herring to 1890 and Charles Byam until 1903. A butcher shop was located behind the store.

18. Site of Blacksmith Shop owned by William MacDonald. Buggies and cutters were made here in the 1890s.

19. Scenic River Road. Many 19th Century Belfountain homes can be seen here.

20. Baptist Church Manse, 1883. Property originally owned by the McCurdy family in 1846. This is a completely restored home with original frame and some wood work inside. A stone basement and foundation remain of the original home.

21. Site of mill, now the property of Millsite Restaurant.

22&23. Sites of the sawmill and grist mill to be viewed from Millsite Restaurant. These are now private residential areas so please, respect the owners' privacy and do not enter onto these lands.

24. Site of the Clogger's Store, owned by shoe repairer Harry Hepworth. He inherited the building from Mr. and Mrs. George Woodhead. The building mysteriously burnt. The original Belfountain post office was located here.

25. Early Home, now Caledon Hills Ice Cream Parlour. 2 storey, 2 bay house.

26. Belfountain Conservation Area. Open to the public. Entrance fee is $25 for a bus, $3.50 car/parking and 75¢ for walk-in traffic. The park closes at 9 p.m. Fishing is allowed. Pets must be tied at all times.

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Further resources available upon request at
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